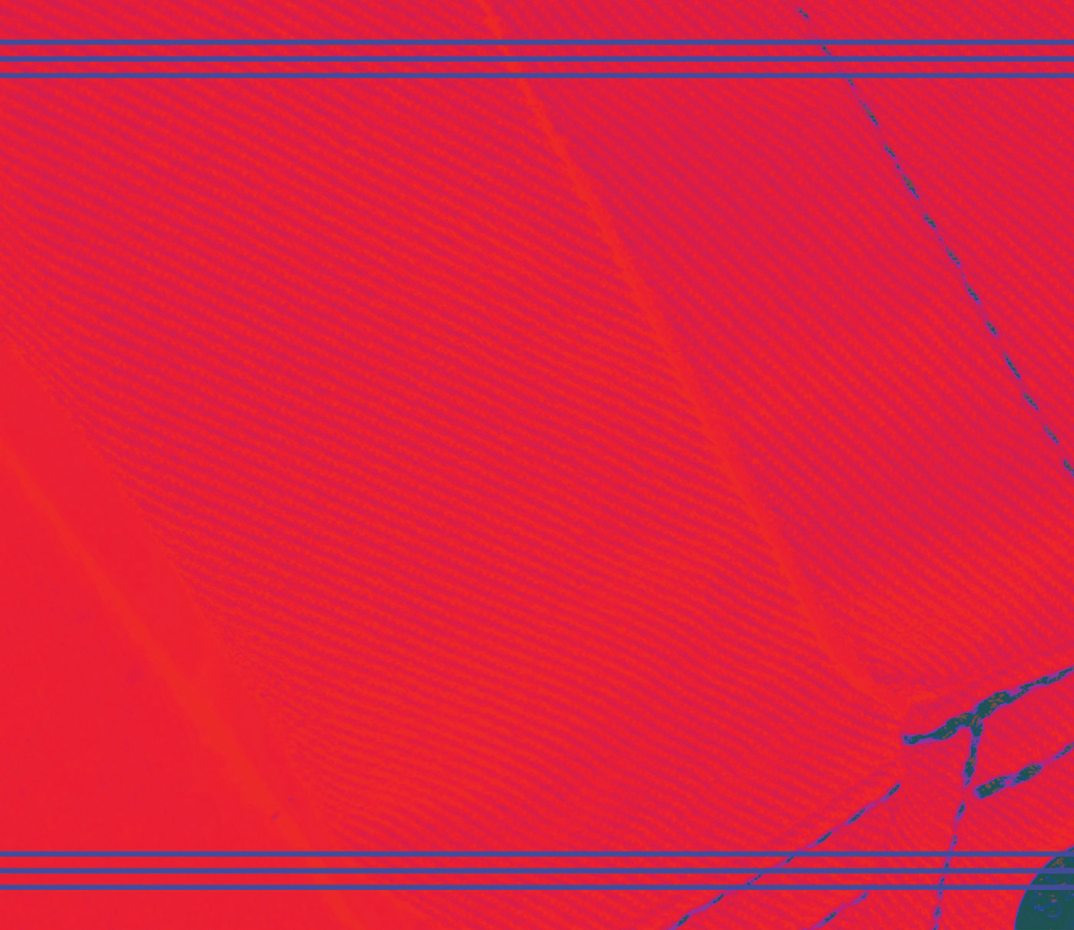
"Murphy Design" and lesser-known bands of the Halifax scene: An interview with Chris Murphy of SLOAN





Chris Murphy of Sloan was kind enough to let me interview him for this project, and between chats about early-Sloan-days manager Peter Rowan and venue promotor Greg Clark, representation in the scene, learning the basics of graphic design, asking him about some lesser known bands, and Murphy's self-deprecating humour sprinkled throughout, I had a lovely time chatting with him.



Could you talk about your early years as a musician and why you wanted to get into music in the first place?

I grew up in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and I thought of and still think of music as something to do socially with friends. I was never interested in partying per se, I never did drugs and drank alcohol and stuff like that. So it was just what I wanted to do with my friends[. . .]. I was into KISS as a kid, and then I was into rock music and Rush and stuff like that, and U2, and I got into punk, and when I got into punk, it was the kind of thing that was aspirational. It's the kind of thing that I could learn how to play this. That's one of the fun things about punk rock. It's like, you could do it, you could be an amateur and still play shows, and I realized that there were people playing shows in my town, kids my age, and it was inspiring partly because some of them were so bad that it's like "I could do that". Had I been in a bigger city, I wouldn't have been as emboldened, but it was such amateur hour that even a guy like me with, you know, I had one or

people came looking for us and we were afforded a chance to do this in a way that makes money

two guitar lessons in grade three but never took piano, really amateur and got together with some people and had a bunch of different bands, and the thing that changed my life was that Nirvana got really big and when Nirvana got really big, those were people that were my age that had been influenced by punk but could put a song together, and when a band seemingly as outside as that from a punk background became a mainstream success, we couldn't believe it, and then essentially people came looking for us and we were afforded a chance to do this in a way that makes money, because up to then everything was a benefit, everything was just for fun. And money does take the fun out of it, but it also gives you the opportunity to make it your job, and there are crappy aspects to that, but I feel pretty fortunate that I have the life I do.

I was also wondering about the promotional side of Murderecords. Could you talk about that and what were some of the ways that you guys helped promote other bands through that record label?

Murderecords was, or still is technically in name, the name of the record label that Sloan owns. So we made up the name when we put out our first little EP called *Peppermint EP* in June 1992. We put Murderecords on it, which I immediately regretted or I didn't want in the first place. It was Andrew's big idea; I thought it was a terrible, violent sounding name. I tried to market correct the name by making the logo a bunch of crows. I don't know if you know what that looks like, it's a bunch of M's that were supposed to be crows because the collective term for crows, murder, and murder of crows, so that's what that's supposed to look like. Then we got signed to Geffen Records out of Los Angeles, so that was a big deal. Not only were we from Canada, we were from the middle of nowhere. So, it was a story that mirrored the Nirvana story because they were from Seattle, they were from the middle of nowhere, and oftentimes in Canada you'd get the Canadian version of an American story, and for about a year there we were Canada's Nirvana. But we had been part of the local music scene and we thought it was really great, but because we were on an international music label, we weren't playing in Halifax anymore. So we wanted to contribute to

the local scene, and we also had a little bit of money, we had been given some money to be on Geffen, so I didn't know what else to do with (the) money. We just put out records by our friends' bands, and to be clear, we never made any money, it was always community service. We probably got some credibility out of it. It was like, "Oh, you guys helped Eric's Trip or Hardship Post or Thrush Hermit or these bands", but it was a really fun project to do as someone in their twenties, living in an outpost basically in small town. And I probably don't need to say this, but the flipside of being able to help people means that there are some people who feel that you didn't help them. When you have a limited amount of assets or ability to help that you can't help everyone, so you also make some enemies that way. But we had a cool little roster, a little run of years from '92 to '98. We put out a lot of records by our friends and we wanted to be a utopian business where if Thrush Hermit— well, Eric's Trip and Jale and Hardship Post all got signed to Sub Pop and oftentimes when you're an indie label you would have your claws into these bands in a way where if someone wanted to sign them, a bigger label, you

we wanted to share the good fortune that we had and promote them in whatever way we could

would also benefit from that. You'd be like, "Well, you have to pay us too". That's kind of how Sub Pop got so rich off Nirvana. They had points on the Geffen record and all that kind of stuff. I don't know if you know what that is, but Nirvana were signed to a small label, Sub Pop, and then they got brought up to the big leagues to Geffen and Sub Pop benefited from that. They sold lots of the Sub Pop record that Nirvana had done and they had points on the Geffen record that Nirvana did. We were trying to be a utopian business by not having contracts and letting everybody go because we have been given such a good opportunity and we wanted to not be seen as trying to get anybody under our thumb. We wanted to share the good fortune that we had and promote them in whatever way we could. By the time we all moved up to Halifax in the late nineties, Murderecords, we sort of put it on ice. We weren't doing anyone a real service anyway. We had a couple of people on staff, but we were really mom-and-pop rinky-dink, so people would put out the record and they'd be like, "What are you doing to help us?" And we were like, "Well, you can come on tour with us. That's really all we can offer you". So I began to think that it was more of a disservice[. . .]. The Sloan records, we put out on Murderecords, which means that we own and control our masters and sometimes we do posthumous releases. Last year, I put out a vinyl version of a

record that only came out on CD that hadn't been on Murderecords, but it was a guy, Matt Murphy, Flashing Lights, that had been part of the family, but Murderecords wasn't really operational by the late nineties, so I was happy to be able to do that, but again, it doesn't make any money. It's just because I wanted something done properly, so I wanted to do it myself.

I was also wondering about how you guys marketed yourselves, like the way you talk about the band in a lot of interviews, It's like, you're the funny one, Jay's the cute one, etcetera, etcetera. Was that a conscious- [Points to himself] I'm the cute one. **(Laugh) Was that a conscious marketing strategy to appeal to a more parasocial, close relationship with your fans?**

What was the word you used? **Parasocial.** I don't even know what that means. In a way, sometimes I would caricature the people in the band. I guess I get to be the funny one, but I'm the third funniest guy in the band, ahead of only Jay. Patrick is very, very funny, but he gets called the grumpy one. He's less immediately gregarious, but he's very, very funny. Andrew is also very, very funny too, and he started out as such a goofball. I'm putting together a reissue of our first record, and I'm looking at all these pictures of us from '90, '91, and it's

in the digital age of music, if you're going to bother making something physical, you might as well make it as nice as it can be

Andrew who is the biggest goof and he turned into the stoic guy. So sometimes I would say that Jay is the seventies pop AM radio, the quiet guy, Patrick is the guy who writes the hits, Andrew's the cerebral guy who's the beautiful Adonis and reserved, and I'm the gregarious one or the goofball, and there's a truth in that, but I sometimes don't want to be goofing around. I'm a pleaser. If I'm here doing this thing with you, I don't want to just be like [pulls a stoic face], I want it to be a pleasant experience. I like marketing. I was influenced by austere, hardcore punk rock. Ian MacKaye, who hates any kind of marketing and that kind of thing, and I understand that, or Fugazi, I don't know if you know who Fugazi is, just really anti— they don't sell merchandise[. . .]. They're just really conscious of not being a product, whereas I grew up on KISS, which is the ultimate product, but I also think that there's a spectrum here that we're on. I don't think that I would sell Sloan coffins the way KISS does, but I'll sell t-shirts. Even packaging, I really like nice packaging. I like the cardboard to be nice. I've spoken to Ian MacKaye several times and he's very utilitarian, it doesn't have to be special, it doesn't have to be a fetish object, just get it out there, like he's just a worker. So

I have that aspect, too. I want to do work and keep doing things and not be too precious about it, but in the digital age of music, if you're going to bother making something physical, you might as well make it as nice as it can be, otherwise you're just making garbage, like stuff for the landfill.

I also want to talk about the rise of the early Internet and fansites. There were a lot of Sloan fansites and the Sloannet mailing list and all that. How did seeing those fansites and fans having easier ways to communicate with each other affect you and your band, like would you keep up with that kind of stuff?

Not really. Patrick had a song in 1996 ["Can't Face Up"], which was essentially about chat group stuff, like stuff happening on the internet. I'm 55, so as this stuff was happening, at one point I would be saying email in italics or with quotes around it, or even "The Internet" or "World Wide Web". We are a pre-Internet band and we're still going. We just rolled with it. I don't know if we really capitalized on that. We did have early message groups and chat groups like Sloannet and these things. It was definitely more ahead of the curve than the band itself, and we can't take any credit for that. It was a guy, James Colby, that started Sloannet in '94? Five? Patrick was always mad

at— they would always be chirping on us or criticizing or something, and he was always mad. I always got a kick out of it, but I don't know if we parlayed that into any way to benefit us. I think that there were people who found community through our band, and I feel fortunate, I feel happy that they met in our name. I think they end up talking about other things, obviously, they don't just talk about songs that we wrote. I don't have a good thesis about the whole thing, but I was aware of it happening. I think if you told a story about our band 50 years from now they would probably be more interested in the fact that we were approximate to the early chat group things. It probably had nothing to do with our music. The people who formed these message boards and chat groups in our name are more a part of the future than we are.

Going back to Halifax, what was it like working with Peter Rowan as your manager in the early days of Sloan and Kearney Lake Rd.?

When we met him, he had a record label out of Fredericton called DTK, Dressed To Kill, and he was probably about five years our senior. So he seemed like a man and we seemed like boys and he had a record label. So we thought that he would be somebody that we had to impress, and then like any growing up story, we realized that he was a goofball like us who was broke and his record label didn't make

chip essentially said, “i can’t work with this guy anymore”, and we had to make a decision. it’s basically (like) our parents divorced, and we chose to go with dad

any money, but he was instrumental in getting our band known and signed. He wasn't really a savvy business guy, but he was a great hype man, and he had a great love of music before he met us. When we met him, he was a music lover like we were. He was just a couple of years older and he wasn't in a band. He was like, “I want to contribute”, and so he was breaking his back and emptying his bank account trying to make things happen, and I got to hand it to him, like he's really sacrificed— it never paid off big for him. He didn't get rich. I didn't get rich either, but I got richer than Peter, I think. We fired Peter Rowan or he broke up— we had a kind of co-management deal. Peter was early in as the hype guy, and then there was a second character named Chip Sutherland who was more of a business guy. He was a lawyer and he was our co-manager, and then that partnership existed for not that long. It seemed like a long time at the time. Maybe it was only a year, maybe it was 18 months, but at some point, Chip essentially said, “I can't work with this guy anymore”, and we had to make a decision. It's basically (like)



our parents divorced, and we chose to go with dad. We went to go with the money making, cold guy instead of the person who loved us, and it was heartbreaking at the time because I love Peter and I still love Peter, but I don't know if I would say I was a coward to go— I wanted to go forward and I felt like he had done what he needed to do, which was get us a record deal. He did all the hype work to do it, the legwork, and now we had one and now we needed to deal with somebody who knew how to do business, and in the end, maybe if we had gone with Peter, we might have had a different kind of career than we did with Chip, but I don't regret it except for that I feel like I kind of betrayed Peter by basically allowing him to be fired. I guess I fired him, or Chip said it's an ultimatum and I chose someone else other than Peter, so I credit him with giving me the opportunity to have the life I have, and I love him. I see him from time to time. I don't even know where he is, is he in Montreal? Do you know him? **I interviewed him a couple of weeks ago. He's in L.A., I think.** Really? **Yeah.** I didn't know that. **Yeah.** He's a great guy.

then greg clark came back with a place called the double deuce, and that became ground zero for what became the halifax pop explosion

Yeah. I'm also curious about Greg Clark and his impact on the Halifax scene. Could you talk about him?

I never really hung out with Greg Clark the way I did with Peter Rowan [. . .]. But he was definitely instrumental. One of the first shows I ever went to was some show at a St. Andrew's school in the West End. It was the Asexuals and Killing Time and Bridge of Tears and Greg Clark put on the show. It was 1985 and I was young. I was in grade 11, and Greg was putting on those shows and there was nobody else except Greg. He had some partners in the Club Flamingo. Eric Hoenig and maybe one other guy, Keith Tubbs. And then Greg actually ended up getting kicked out of the Club Flamingo. They were a threesome, the three of them, and then Greg got kicked out and he also had to pay the price of not booking any shows for a year. It was part of the breakup that they had or part of the legal fees. That happened around '91, and then Greg Clark came back with a place called the Double Deuce, and that became ground zero for what became the Halifax Pop Explosion. Greg Clark had been synonymous with the name the Flamingo. There were several Flamingos. I went to one with picnic tables in it. I saw a band

there[. . .], they were called The Realists, and Club Med played. So that was like '84. He was grinding and putting on shows to barely anybody, and then they had the Club Flamingo on Gottingen Street, which was in an old movie theater, and they tried to make a go of that. They would get some big acts, like they had the Wailers come, the Cowboy Junkies played there, and it was all-ages, and then they got a liquor license, and that's around the time that Greg got ousted for a while. But then he came back and then he did a series of clubs, the Double Deuce, Birdland, Waldo's. Greg Clark was basically the only game in town for— like, we needed a place to play, and Greg supplied that. We needed CKDU, the college radio station, and they were good to us. And managers and infrastructure like that, (we) didn't really need that because there was no money in a lot of that early time, but as soon as Nirvana happened, there was more money changing hands and it became more of a business.

I know there's a lot of crossover with the rock scene and the hip hop scene in Halifax, and you guys worked with Hip Club Groove and Buck 65. How did those connections come about and why was there that crossover in the first place?

I always feel bad talking about the hip hop scene and the rock scene because I feel like there should have been a lot more crossover. Buck 65 is white and two of the kids in Hip Club Groove are white, but there were lots of black kids doing hip hop, and I went to a couple of those shows, too.

I would have met Rich Terfry at CKDU but he would also go to rock shows, and so would the Hip Club Groove kids. I think they were just on the scene, but I do think that it was a fairly segregated scene. I don't think there were a lot of kids, black kids from the hip hop community going to see Sloan shows, and I definitely didn't think about it until I— thinking back now, the hip hop crossover is like— yeah, I like a couple of those bands. We had a couple of hip hop acts on Murderecords, but it was decidedly a white experience in a pretty segregated town. It makes me kind of embarrassed to think about. I think Stinkin' Rich was doing really interesting, crazy, outside things, and I thought that Hip Club Groove record called *Trailer Park Hip Hop*, I just thought it was the coolest record that came out on Murderecords, it was so exciting. Again, as a utopian business, we essentially tried to give everyone their records back so that they don't feel like they can't promote them themselves. There's part of me that wishes that I had all of the Murderecords stuff, (that) I had the rights to it in a way that I could put it all on Spotify in a way that's comprehensible and you could see the whole Murderecords roster, because I think we had an impressive roster[. . .].

You kind of answered my next question, which was that do you think there are barriers people faced in getting into the Halifax music scene in the first place? 'Cause that's kind of what I was getting towards, is that it was a very white scene.

Oh yeah, for sure. I guess it was a barrier, but I definitely wasn't thinking of that at all. Again, that's no excuse, but I was more aware of other rock bands that were probably thinking, "What about us? What about our band?" I was conscious of the fact that I couldn't put out everybody's record. The other joke was in terms of giving people a leg up, if somebody was like, "How come our record can't be on Murderecords?" Like, "Oh, really? You want to sell 300 records? 30 records?" It was so small-time, everything was really small-time. Now, there were a couple of acts that broke out. This band The Super Friendz, I think they probably sold 6000 records, so that was big. Sloan doesn't sell 6000 records probably anymore, but that was a different time. Anyway, I don't mean to avoid the barriers thing. In terms of representation, Jale were women, four women. Eric's Trip had one woman. Plumtree was a band of

i always feel bad talking about the hip hop scene and the rock scene because i feel like there should have been a lot more crossover

women that were not on our label. I think I thought at the time of Plumtree that they were so young. I was like, I don't want to hang out with, how old were they, 18-year-old girls? I don't want to hang out with them, I was 24 or whatever. But I mean, I didn't know them, I knew two of the girls from Plumtree from my church, I went to church as a kid and I had them over to my house and I recorded them and stuff, like they were friends of mine. Anyway, I felt it was weird at the time to have 16-year-old girls as my friends. [Laugh] I'm gonna put my foot in my mouth. I could have been like a teacher to them, like it's not weird for a teacher to hang out with a student, it was clear boundaries, but the women in Jale, J-A-L-E, they were all my age. I didn't feel as goofy hanging around with those guys [laugh].

Moving into the visual aspect of your band, where did your interest in graphic design come from? Did you get into it through being in a band, or was that something you were always into?

I only got into it I think in the nineties through being in a band. My friend Ian McGettigan, who was in a band called Thrush Hermit, he had a couple design books, like annuals of *Graphis* (which) is a design magazine, and they would have Graphis Annuals, like the Graphis Annual 1973, '74, and he had one at our house. I lived with him for a while and I was really turned on by it and then I started looking for them. That would be what I'd do on tours. I would go to used bookstores and look for old graphic design books,

once you get into the eighties and nineties, i didn't like the look of modern design anymore

and then I amassed a pretty big collection, and my graphic design abilities, I learned QuarkXPress in the nineties, which was the layout program of what became InDesign. I'm able to use InDesign, I use Photoshop and InDesign and I know how to do those things, and I learned in the nineties. I don't have crazy skills, but I know what I like, and as I say, I'm essentially copying stuff I like from old magazines anyway, like "Oh, we could do something like this, use the text from this and use this". I tend to like simple things, like in those graphic design magazines, once you get into the eighties and nineties, I didn't like the look of modern design anymore. I don't know if the zine I like is basically like war-torn countries in post-war Europe that had no choice but to make

simple photocopy artwork. I just like the look of poster-ized, simple art, and I got into it in the nineties. I had gone to NSCAD (and) there was a design aspect of NSCAD. You do foundation year and then you can choose design or fine arts. Even by that point I wasn't thinking about design. I didn't get that far at NSCAD because I had already been (for) four years at Dalhousie, but I was just in the fine arts stream, but NSCAD had a whole graphic design (program), but I didn't really benefit, I didn't take advantage of that, I should have[. . .].

What would you say was the relationship between visual designers and musicians in the scene? Were there certain graphic designers that were known in the scene, or was it more like people would do their own thing?

There was a guy who since died, Scott Tappen, who did some posters for shows. He was in some bands, and he did a lot of posters for shows, but we preferred to do it in-house, like Andrew Scott went to NSCAD as well and he's got a sophisticated design sense, and

Jay and I are control freaks that like to do everything ourselves if we can. Who else was doing design? A lot of the people had gone to NSCAD. So, the women in Jale, that band Jale, J-A-L-E, they all went to NSCAD, so they did a lot of their own artwork, too. I think almost everybody who came out of NSCAD was doing their own artwork it seems to me now that I think of it. It's a good question, though.

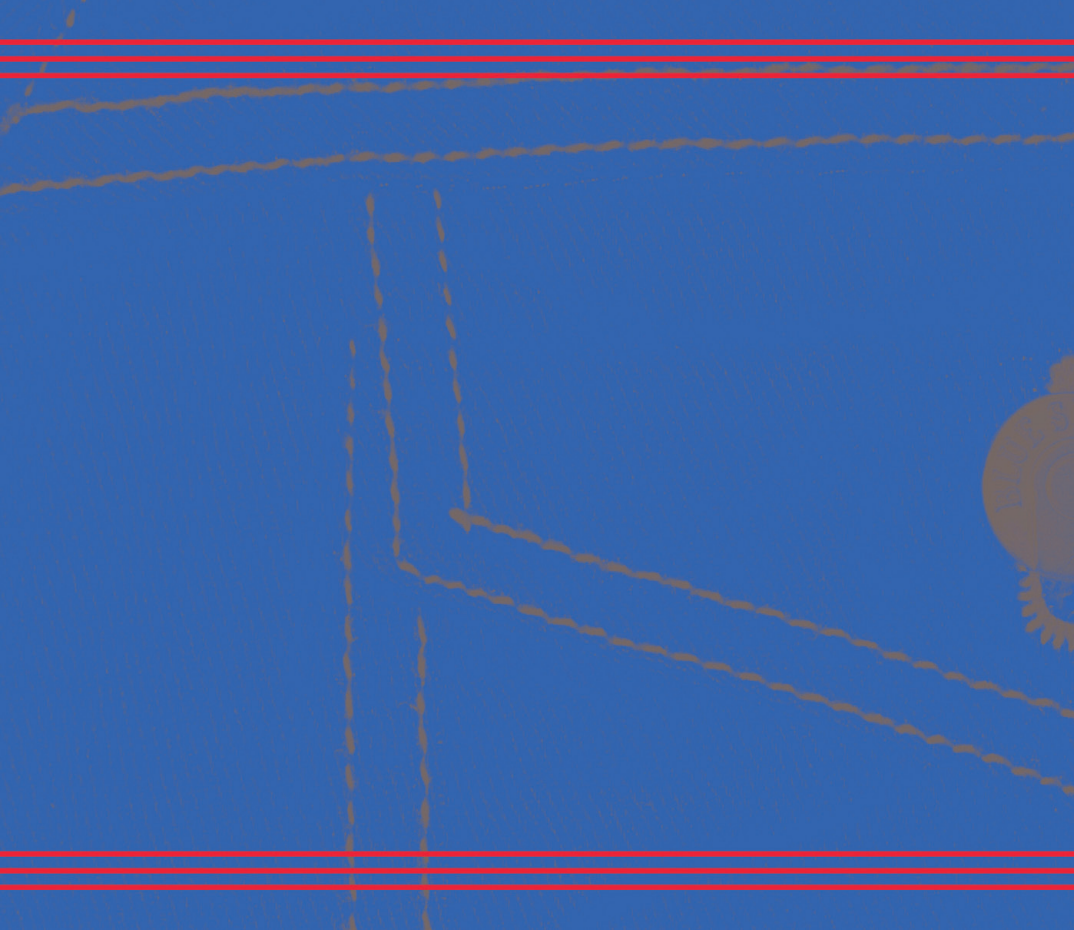
Were there certain people that were making your CD and vinyl inserts?

Yeah, that's right. Before I knew how to do that kind of stuff, I relied heavily on a guy named Chris Mueller, and Chris Mueller was in the music scene and he went on to great success. He went and worked in New York for *Vanity Fair* and all these things. He was a real designer who made it and did well, but he would joke— so, this is maybe too inside baseball, but tell me if you understand this. So you understand that InDesign is a layout program, and if you have photos in it, if you're sending it to a place to get printed, you would also have to send... I don't know how it works in InDesign, certainly with Quark you had

to also send the fonts, you had to also send the photos. **Right.** Does it work like that with InDesign? **I don't think nowadays it works like that, maybe—(Note from Violeta: It definitely still works like that, I don't know why I said no).** -Well it used to. Anyway, I would send something to someone, like a Quark file, which would be like 27K. You also had to send the photo with it. It basically told you where to put it on the page, and so I was trying to design my own stuff, but I would have Chris Mueller come, I was like, "I don't understand why this isn't working" and he'd say, "Where are your fonts?" I was like, "I don't know," "Where are the photos?" "I don't know", and then he would pick up the phone as if he was

he would pick up the phone as if he was answering a phone at my office and he would say "murphy design" as if I had my own design firm

answering a phone at my office and he would say "Murphy Design" as if I had my own [laugh] design firm. He's basically making fun of the fact that I was so shit at design. I just didn't know how anything worked. Like, "Murphy Design". Anyway, shout out to Chris Mueller. I became hands-on on how to do that. I had my friend Bruce Worrall (who) helped me put together the first thing we did, our *Peppermint* EP, and then I think Chris Mueller, my friend Andrew Glencross, he worked at Etcetera Press and he knew how to use Photoshop, but I was always at Kinko's trying to make these record covers. I would rent time on a computer at Kinko's. That's what I was doing in the nineties. I had those friends help me. My friend Catherine Stockhausen is a photographer and I often use her photos, and I would have to also credit her design sense. I met her at NSCAD as well, so oftentimes I would be dependent on Catherine Stockhausen's photos. I still am, and the design of Chris Mueller, Andrew Glencross, Bruce Worrall, all these people. But I eventually learned the skills that I can do most of that stuff myself. But just the boring, "How do you output this to a printer?" I use my friend Simon Evers these days and he helps me do everything properly. I make a mock up of everything, then he'll say, "Here's what you did wrong" and help me figure it out.



Digging deeper into East Coast bands...

At this point, I asked Chris about specific bands from the East Coast, pulling names from a Halifax music scene family tree that he made back in the nineties and was shared on Sloannet.

Spike N

I have a tape. Their song was called "Full Circle Around". That was the song that got on the *Hear & Now* [DTK Records] compilation that started the process of us— we got on that *Hear & Now* compilation. We had to enter a song in a contest to get studio time and we recorded our song "Underwhelmed" in September '91, and with this great timing, I think that was just as Nirvana's *Nevermind* was breaking and we were starting to record, and by December we had basically a whole record recorded, December '91. Spike N, our contemporaries, Jason Ives, Dave Pierce, I don't know who the third guy was. I probably do, but I can't think. But do you know what Spike N is a reference to?

No. Spike N is a reference to Matt Groening, the creator of *The Simpsons*. He had this series called *Life in Hell*. Have you ever heard of that? **No, I haven't.** It's from the eighties. It would have been in underground newspapers and arts weekly's and that kind of thing. It was like an overbitten rabbit with one ear. Have you ever seen these drawings before? Anyway, it's called *Life in Hell*, and I think Spike N was the name of one of the bullies in that comic book. Their big song was called "Full Circle Around", and their drummer was Dave Pierce, whose sister is Jennifer Pierce, who was in that band Jale, with whom I went to prom.

Basic English

Basic English was on the *Out of the Fog* compilation which Greg Clark put out under the Flamingo Records in 1986. They were an example. They and the Jellyfishbabies got [in air quotes] "so big" in Halifax that they moved to Toronto and they played some shows on Queen Street, but it really didn't make much of an impact. Basic English was less punk than the Jellyfishbabies are for me. To me, they were almost like a country rock band. But they were just a rock band. They were good. I was too punk to like it at the time, but they were pretty good. I used to think of Toronto as everybody wearing cowboy boots and loving rockabilly or something. That's what I pictured Toronto being when I lived in Halifax, but it was a bit cowboy boot-y for me. Basic English, cool band.

Phÿcus

Phÿcus, they were a crazy, industrial (band), they were into... I don't know, like, British, scary, like Throbbing Gristle or something like that. Stuff that I don't really know that much about. One time, a whole bunch of bands, including Phÿcus and I don't know who I was playing with. It wasn't Sloan, it was before Sloan, but we would often go to an open mic night at the Flamingo on Mondays because it was one of the only ways that we could play on a stage using

amplification. We would go and you'd sign up to do a song, but we all agreed to learn a song from *Abbey Road* and we thought that we would record them just with simple tape recorders or something, and we would arrange them all so that we could run the *Abbey Road* medley, like we could edit that. But Phÿcus, they did "Because", I don't know if you can think of "Because" by The Beatles, it's this beautiful lullaby, but they were just this crazy, Nine Inch Nails-y, like [in a feigned shout] "Because! Because!" It's just noise and craziness. Phÿcus was, I mean, I didn't like it, but they were funny and it was really arty, art school guys.

Aimless

Aimless were like the Descendents or what became Blink-182 and stuff like that. They were like power pop, funny, they were cute and young and they should have been huge. They were just kids, disorganized, but they were young and good looking and they played high energy, bubblegum pop, but they were all versed in punk rock and they were good players. Yeah, they were great. It included Mike Jackson, who went on to some fame in *Trailer Park Boys* as the two sidekick characters, Cory and Trevor. Cory is Cory Bowles from Hip Club Groove, and Trevor was Mike Jackson from Aimless.

Donner Party Reunion

Donner Party Reunion was the brother of Cliff Gib. Cliff Gib was Patrick Pentland's best friend and they were in bands (Ripping) Convulsions and Happy Co., and Cliff's brother Clayton was in Donner Party Reunion. Do you know what the Donner Party is? **No.** It's like a plane that crashed in the Andes or somewhere and they all had to eat each other. It was a cannibalism story, it was totally awful, but I guess the joke is that [laugh] there's a reunion, like they get back together to talk about the things they did. I don't know if I ever saw them, actually. They would have been a punk thrash band, I think.

Tetris

Tetris was the middle band of three, it's the same band, but they were called the Five Loggers and they would have played with my band Kearney Lake Rd. with Jay in like late eighties. Then they became Tetris[. . .], and then they changed their name to Infra Dig. Sean Kirby was the guy who was in the band the whole time, and he kind of ran it, and he was a little bit younger than me, charismatic kid. They brought young kids out to shows. I guess my criticism of them became like— I felt like they took the responsibility to tackle these big issues in song that became so humorless to me. It was all very serious, but he was a sweet guy. I haven't seen him in a long time.

I have a random question about one of your songs. "Suppose they Close the Door" is my favourite Sloan song. I'm just wondering, what's the story behind that? 'Cause I heard it's about a specific person, but I don't know anything beyond that.

I don't know who it's about. Did I say it was about a specific person? **I think someone else did, but I don't know. Could be wrong.** I guess I felt like at the time that a lot of the people that I knew were younger than me, and I felt like when I'm [in air quotes] "trash talking" my friends, I ended up feeling like I was— retroactively there by 1998, that I had been [in air quotes] "trash talking" people that were not only younger than me, but I was such a privileged, lucky guy. I was on Geffen Records. I was such hot shit in town, and it made me feel kind of regretful that I had— in my mind, I'm just having fun and like, "These guys suck", "This guy's an asshole" but

I also feel like maybe people had to hold their tongue around me when they wanted to tell me off because I had some kind of perceived power

in a loving way to me. But again, I feel like I was thinking about having been kind of a bully with young people[. . .]. I just want to hang out with people with whom I can act at full strength. I'm tired of kid gloves all the time, but that's just a selfish way to be when (you) have a big record deal and you're with money and you're lucky[. . .]. I also feel like maybe people had to hold their tongue around me when they wanted to tell me off because I had some kind of perceived power, or they felt like they didn't want to be in my bad books or something, I don't know. I don't know how specific I was about anyone, but anyway, all I've been talking about with you is that I basically was mean to people and ignored people the whole time [both laugh]. In my mind, I was constantly trying to help people, but whatever.

The last question I have is what were some bands that you knew that you felt deserved more recognition at that time?

The Jellyfishbabies I loved so much. They put out two tapes and then they did a record and I think it's all genius, and then they kept going and they made another record that I thought got too serious. Now, that's coming from a goofball, that doesn't mean that it's too serious for you or too serious for people, but I ended up thinking it was too serious. Again, that's coming from someone who maybe (is) too much of a coward to talk about real issues or something. But I love the Jellyfishbabies. There was a band called Hardship Post. They got signed to Sub Pop. I thought they were really great, I was really jealous of them.

I interviewed Sebastian a while ago. Oh, did you? **Yeah.** I would love to put out a Hardship Post record of that early stuff, and we'll see. I see Sebastian in Vancouver. Do you see him there? Is that where you are? **Yeah, that's where I am, but we just talked over Zoom. We didn't talk in-person.**

Right, but he seems to be a lovely guy. They seemed to shut it all down in about 1994 and then he was gone, I didn't see him again, and now he's reappeared. He comes to see Sloan now and we hang out, but only in the past couple of years. I didn't really grow up with him, but I thought that he was a great writer, cool guitar player, and they had a great band, and they came to town just as Andrew moved away from Halifax, so I was really mad at Andrew from my band moving to Toronto because I thought that we wouldn't stay— we wouldn't practice, so Hardship Post were so good they made me jealous. So again, the headlines are: I'm a jealous bully who marginalizes people. I think you could make something out of that [laugh].

(You're welcome Chris for not making that the title)



